

THE BIG OUTBREAK DISEASES HISTORY AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

BÜYÜK SALGINLAR TARİHİ VE COVID-19 PANDEMİSİ

Fuat İNCE¹, Rasih YAZKAN²

¹Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Tıp Tarihi ve Etik Ana Bilim Dalı, Isparta, Türkiye

²Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Hastanesi Başhekimliği, Isparta, Türkiye

Cite this article as: Ince F, Yazkan R. The Big Outbreak Diseases History And The Covid-19 Pandemic. Med J SDU 2021; (özelsayı-1):249-251.

“...Behold, O gods, O my masters, I offer you sacrifices of penance for my country, to save my country from the plague. Take these pains outfrom my heart, take these fears from my soul.”
The Plague Prayer, Hittite King Mursili-II (1339-1310 BC-estimated)

Öz

Bulaşıcı hastalıklardan kaynaklanan salgınlar tarih boyunca insanlığın en büyük meselelerinden birisi olmuştur. Büyük salgınlar antik dönemlerden günümüze insanların hayatlarını etkilemişlerdir. Geçmişte milyonlarca insanın ölümüne neden olan epidemiler ve pandemiler modern dönemde de çeşitli isimler altında ortaya çıkmışlardır. 20. Yüzyılın başında görülen İspanyol Gribinden sonra bu sefer Covid-19 hem sağlık hem de diğer alanlarda yaşattığı olumsuzluklar ile insanoğlunun karşısına dikilmiştir. Hem geçmiş ve bitmiş salgınlardan hem de Covid-19'tan elde edilen tecrübelerin gelecek için yol gösterici olacağını düşünmekteyiz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bulaşıcı hastalık, salgın hastalık, epidemiler, pandemi, Covid-19

Abstract

The outbreaks caused by infectious diseases have been one of the biggest issues of humanity throughout the history. The big outbreak diseases have affected people's lives since ancient times. The epidemics and pandemics that caused the death of millions of people in the past have emerged under various names in the modern period. After the Spanish Flu seen at the beginning of the 20th century, this time Covid-19 stood against human beings with the negativities it caused in both health and other areas. We think that the experiences obtained from both past and finished outbreaks and Covid-19 will be guiding for the future.

Keywords: Infectious disease, outbreak disease, epidemic, pandemic, Covid-19

Dear Editor,

Mankind has given one of the greatest struggles against infectious diseases from past to present. There are many recorded epidemics and pandemics in the history. It is possible to find information about these in

many geographies from China to Mesopotamia, from India to Anatolia and from Egypt to Europe. So much so that these diseases have affected the great loss of lives, the weakening and destruction of the great states established throughout history, the change of social order and whether wars will result in victory or

İletişim kurulacak yazar/Corresponding author: incefuat@gmail.com

Müracaat tarihi/Application Date: 12.04.2021 • Kabul tarihi/Accepted Date: 15.04.2021

ORCID IDs of the authors: F.İ. 0000-0002-2887-7512; R.Y. 0000-0002-7369-6710

defeat. With these aspects, epidemics and pandemics have been important actors in shaping world history (1).

Humans have resorted to various means in order to get rid of the outbreak diseases that are seen as a punishment to humans by the gods. The text known as "the Hittite King Mursili-II's Prayer" in medical history sources; it draws attention with its human enveloping expression and is regarded as one of the first examples in the world in this field (1). It was believed that the plague epidemic that swept through Anatolia during the Hittites period for twenty years started because the King Suppiluliuma-I had broken its promise. King Suppiluliuma-I himself and his son also died in this epidemic. Mursili-II, who became king after them, had prayed to the gods to end the epidemic (2).

Of course, each epidemic and pandemic is worth considering separately in terms of its effects. If we try to describe important outbreaks in chronological order, it would be appropriate to start with "the Outbreak of the Antoninus (165-180)" from the Roman period. Since this outbreak was described by the famous physician Galen (129-199 estimated), it is also referred to by his name (3). The outbreak is thought to be caused by plague, smallpox or measles. The outbreak emerged at a time when Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius, who were adopted by Antoninus Pius, ruled the country together. Verus died in 169, and Aurelius in 180. The outbreak, which spread to the wide Roman geography through the soldiers participating in the expeditions to Anatolia and Syria, can be described as the first pandemic of the old times. This pandemic, which caused the death of a large number of people, affected Roman Empire so deeply that it was listed among the factors that led Rome to division and destruction along with other reasons in the next period (3).

Another important outbreak is "the Justinian Plague" that started in 541. The outbreak that affected Eastern Rome was named after him because it emerged during the reign of Emperor Justinian. Its effects lasted until 767 with fluctuations. It reached Istanbul with grain ships coming from Egypt (4). The disease is transmitted to humans by fleas on mice that carry plague germs. The plague caused a great devastation in Istanbul, and no place was found to bury the people who died. It is estimated that the pandemic, which reached from Iran to Britain and Denmark, caused the death of more than one hundred million people (4).

The great plague outbreak called "black death" in

Europe started in 1347. The disease that spread from Mediterranean ports to Europe by ships, almost erased a lot of villages and cities from the map (1). It killed more than sixty million people by 1357. It is thought that this number corresponds to one third of the total population of Europe. With the disasters experienced, Europeans realized that both the plague and diseases such as leprosy and syphilis are contagious. Ships have been kept distant for a period of twenty or forty days in order to prevent diseases that may come through ships (1). The plague outbreak, whose effects have continued for many years with various fluctuations, triggered important developments in Europe. The absolute power of the feudal order and the church was shaken, scientific understanding began to come to the fore (5).

Apart from the plague, other outbreaks also were affect the humanity, such as the cholera and the smallpox epidemics (6). However, the Spanish Flu pandemic (1918-1919) that occurred at the beginning of the 20th century is very striking in terms of its lethality. The number of deaths in the pandemic was higher than those who died in the First World War between 1914-1918 (7).

The Spanish Flu, which spread almost all over the world within a few months, killed between forty and a hundred million people. The reason why the name of the disease is Spanish Flu is not because the disease originated here, but because it was announced here for the first time. It is assumed that its origin is the United States of America (USA). After the first wave between March and August 1918, the second wave with very high mortality occurred between September and December of the same year. The last and third wave occurred in the January-May period of 1919 (7).

After the Spanish Flu, Hong Kong Flu between 1968-1970, AIDS from 1981 to present, SARS in 2002-2003, Swine Flu between 2009 and 2010, and Ebola between 2014-2016 were other diseases that threaten humanity (6). In the days we are still in, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the whole world. At the end of 2019, cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology were seen in City of Wuhan, People's Republic of China. On January 7, 2020, it was understood that these pneumonia cases were caused by a new type of coronavirus. This virus has been named SARS CoV2 because it is be likened to the virus that causes SARS disease. The disease caused by this virus is named 2019-nCoV or Covid-19. Today, the name Covid-19 is more widely accepted as the name of the disease. It has been declared as a pandemic on 11 March 2020

by the World Health Organization (WHO) due to its rapid spread throughout the world (8).

The Covid-19 pandemic has unexpectedly affected the whole world in a period where terms such as globalization and shrinkage of the world are frequently used. Words such as hygiene, social distance and isolation are used more frequently now. Today, the virus is trying to stand against the weapons that humanity has developed or is trying to develop against itself with its various variants. Apart from being a health problem, it affects the whole world with its social, economic and cultural aspects. Since the first days of the epidemic, there has been a great need for health supplies, ventilator devices and intensive care units. Nowadays, vaccination applications have begun, although limited. However, increasing the amount of vaccines and making vaccines accessible to everyone have emerged as new problems.

As a result, this process has once again demonstrated how important issues such as healthcare personnel, hospital facilities and capabilities, health technologies and production capacity are. It is certain that the results to be obtained from the examination of past outbreak diseases will be useful today, and the information and experiences to be obtained from this pandemic will be very important experiences for the next days.

References

1. Bayat AH. Tıp Tarihi. İstanbul: Üçer Matbaacılık; 2016.
2. Dinçol AM. Ashella Rituali (Cth 394) Ve Hititlerde Salgın Hastalıklara Karşı Yapılan Majik İşlemlere Toplu Bir Bakış. Belleten. 1985;XLIX(193):1–40.
3. Sayar MH. Marcus Aurelius ve Lucius Verus Dönemlerinde M.S. 165-180 Yılları Arasında Görülen Büyük Salgın. Tarih. 2020;71(1):15–28.
4. Yıldırım N. Salgın Afetlerinde İstanbul. Afetlerin Gölgesinde İstanbul. Öztürk S. (ed.), İstanbul: İstanbul Kültür A.Ş.; 2010. s. 109–84.
5. Özden K, Özmat M. Salgın ve Kent: 1347 Veba Salgınının Avrupa'da Sosyal, Politik ve Ekonomik Sonuçları. İdealkent. 2014;(12):60–87.
6. Özlü A, Öztaş D. Yeni Corona Pandemisi (Covid-19) İle Mücadelede Geçmişten Ders Çıkartmak. Ankara Med J. 2020;(2):468–81.
7. Temel MK, Ertin H. 1918 Grip Pandemisi Kıssasından COVID-19 Pandemisine Hisseler. Anatol Clin. 2020;25(Özel Sayı 1):63-78.
8. İnce F, Evcil FY. Covid-19'un Türkiye'deki İlk Üç Haftası. SdÜ Sağlık Bilimleri Enstitüsü Derg. 2020;11(2):236–41.